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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002974

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [FR](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: PM RAFFARIN'S APRIL 21-24 TRIP TO CHINA

REF: A. BEIJING 7133

[1](#)B. PARIS 1698

[1](#)C. BEIJING 7150

[1](#)D. BEIJING 4854

[1](#)E. BRUSSELS 1542

Classified By: Charge Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Building on the high-profile exchange of French and Chinese presidential visits last year, Prime Minister Raffarin focused his late April visit mostly on economic issues and cultural affairs. His statement that China's March anti-secession law is "compatible" with the French position vis-a-vis Taiwan drew our interest, but few headlines. The MFA tried to explain Raffarin's remarks by saying that the anti-secession law was consistent with the "one-China" policy that both the French and the United States espouse. As for the military measures foreseen by the law, the MFA said that the "non-pacific measures" referred to in the law did not necessarily mean force, but could instead be construed as an embargo or a block on investment. Both Raffarin and our MFA colleagues also repeated the French line in favor of lifting the EU's arms embargo, and in particular, by the end of June as decided by the December European Council.
END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff spoke with MFA China desk officer Arnaud Roux -- who was on the delegation -- on April 28 to discuss the Prime Minister's trip to China. Roux noted that Raffarin visited Beijing, Shenyang, and Shanghai from April 21 through 24, accompanied by Exterior Commerce Minister Francois Loos, Agriculture Minister Dominique Bussereau, Minister Delegate for Research Francois d'Aubert, MFA State Secretary Renaud Muselier, and Transport Ministry State Secretary Francois Goulard, along with some 30 business people -- reflecting the strong commercial focus of the visit.

ANTI-SECESSION LAW

[1](#)3. (C) It was, however, Raffarin's statement on China's anti-secession law that caught our attention. Apparently seeking to delink China's March passage of the law from EU plans to lift the embargo, Raffarin, at a press conference, described the law as "completely compatible" with the French position on Taiwan. Queried on this point, Roux said that what Raffarin meant was that the anti-secession law was consistent with the one-China policy espoused by France ever since it had opened diplomatic relations with the PRC. "Raffarin only re-stated this position," Roux said. When poloff pointed out the disturbing provision of the law that would allow the use of military force against Taiwan, Roux contested this, saying that the "non-pacific measures" mentioned in the law did not necessarily mean using force. China could employ, for example, an embargo against Taiwanese goods or investment as a means to pressure Taiwan -- the law did not necessarily mean the Chinese would use force. Poloff responded that it appeared that the French had a different understanding of "non-pacific measures" than not only the U.S. but also than several of its European neighbors.

[1](#)4. (C) Roux also remarked that the French find the recent visit to Beijing by Taiwan KMT chairman Lien Chan to be a positive step, noting that Chinese willingness to talk "even with the opposition" showed its goodwill (this conversation took place before the issuance of the joint communique from the PRC and Taiwan's KMT).

EU ARMS EMBARGO

[1](#)5. (C) Raffarin, during a press event with Chinese PM Wen Jiabao, called the embargo "anachronistic, wrongfully discriminatory, and in complete contradiction of the current state of the strategic partnership between Europe and China." Raffarin repeated that "France continues to request the lifting of the embargo and does not see what could lead the European Council to change its position," referring to the December 2004 Council decision to lift the embargo by the end of June 2005.

[1](#)6. (C) Roux repeated the French line that the lifting would be a "political step only" in recognition of Chinese progress. He pressed poloff, noting even the U.S. had recognized this when the USG declined to present a resolution condemning Chinese human rights abuses at this year's HRC. Poloff responded that indeed the U.S. had seen small steps of

improvement, which merited a modest measure such as refraining from bringing the human rights resolution, but that in no way had China made enough progress to merit lifting an embargo that would allow it to buy more arms. Roux responded with the repeated French line that the French have no intentions of selling arms to the Chinese.

17. (C) Roux said that Chirac will continue to press for a decision on the arms embargo -- positive or negative -- by the end of the Luxembourg EU presidency. When poloff asked whether Chirac would press for such a decision even if he believed he might not get the answer he wanted, Roux said yes.

18. (C) According to Roux, the two sides did not discuss the recent tension between China and Japan.

COMMERCIAL DEALS

19. (U) According to press accounts, China ordered 10 new Airbus planes (5 A319s for China Eastern and 5 A319/A320s for Shenzhen Airlines), worth 500 million to 600 million dollars, and finalized the already announced contract for 5 Airbus A380s. The French delegation also announced that they would like to see 1,000 more French SMEs working in China "des" 2005.

COMMENT

10. (C) The French continue to press for the lifting of the embargo (reftels B and C), even in the face of skepticism coming from their EU colleagues, in particular since China's March passage of the anti-secession law (refs D and E). While the French press conveyed Raffarin's statement on the compatibility of the law with the French position on Taiwan, it did not attract much attention. Editorialists did not seize on the issue, choosing instead to comment on the commercial aspects of the trip. This illustrates the underlying theme we have seen in the French view of the French-Chinese relationship: strategic and commercial interests prevail. As Raffarin demonstrated, the French continue to characterize U.S. security concerns in the region as overblown, allowing them to justify their pursuit of a lift. They may calculate that being publicly outspoken in favor of lifting the embargo even if their EU partners are not persuade, will win them favor in Beijing. Paris continues to cultivate that relationship in part because of the commercial opportunities it sees there, but also because Chirac believes that China is an essential element to the multipolar political arrangement that he envisions as optimal for French power projection. END COMMENT.
ROSENBLATT